

Nahum-by Nathan White

Chapter 1

The book of Nahum is directed at Assyria, the nation responsible for conquering the northern kingdom of Israel. Nahum's oracles address the fall of its capital city, Nineveh, and the destruction of its king. This seemingly impossible prophecy would be accomplished by Babylon, but you might notice that Nahum doesn't mention Babylon as the conqueror to come. He attributes it entirely to God, who is ultimately sovereign over the nations, opening this first chapter with a reference to God's self-description from Exodus and closing it with words strikingly reminiscent of Isaiah. He emphasizes God's unchanging character as well as the deliverance he has offered and will offer to his people throughout history. Ultimately, this aspect of God's character points us clearly to Jesus, who delivers us from the powers of sin and death. In fact, Paul even uses the language from verse 15 that is shared with Isaiah 52 to refer specifically to the preaching of the gospel (Romans 10:15). Because of Christ, all that would destroy us – sin, death, and even Satan himself – “is utterly cut off.” (v.1:15).

Chapter 2

In addition to taking the northern kingdom of Israel into captivity, Assyria had also assaulted Judah. Nahum declares that though Assyria was once an instrument of discipline, God is now “restoring the majesty of Jacob as the majesty of Israel” (v.2) by destroying Assyria. Of course, as we see throughout the prophets, the absolute sovereignty of God over the nations is on display. He can and does use wicked nations as instruments, however that does not excuse their wickedness. They are still responsible for their violence and depravity irrespective of the fact that God leveraged it for his own purposes. We see a picture of Nineveh's absolute destruction in this chapter. The chapter ends with a chilling declaration: “I am against you,’ declares the Lord of hosts.” This title of God actually has a militant aspect to it. He commands the armies of heaven. Previously, in a single night, “the angel of the Lord went out and struck down 185,000 in the camp of the Assyrians.” (2 Kings 19:35). They will now face the full strength of heaven's armies.

Chapter 3

This chapter is full of open taunts of Nineveh. Nahum declares that God will not just destroy them. He intends to shame them. They gloried in their own strength and now they will be made to look weak. In addition to the very clear promise of shame in verses 5-6, God even mocks their rulers, saying that they are “like grasshoppers” and “clouds of locusts” who will scatter as soon as they are in trouble (v.17). Another major theme throughout this chapter is Assyria's relationship to other nations. Not only can they expect no aid, they can expect their downfall to cause rejoicing (v.7, 19). This particular judgment on Assyria is little more than the natural result of their actions. They have solidified their own power by mercilessly crushing other nations and people groups. Though nations might have periodically run to Assyria for protection, allured by its strength (v.4), no one would want to help protect Assyria after generations of cruelty. As is so often the case, their own sin was part of their judgment. They will be destroyed both for and by their sin.

-Reflecting on Nahum-

Before moving on to our next book of the Bible, take some time today to reflect on what we've read in Nahum. Perhaps re-visit a favorite chapter or an especially meaningful passage. Or read the beginning chapter(s) again, now that you've read the whole. Or go back to a part of the book that struck you as curious and see if it makes more sense now. Or speed-read the whole thing again, seeking to reinforce its main themes. Or... perhaps you need a catch-up day

to finish Nahum before we move forward?

So Jesus said to the Jews who had believed him, "If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples, and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free." John 8.31-32